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ME WITHOUT YOU

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IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS:

HACK/SLASH
ME WITHOUT YOU

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CHICAGO.
THREE YEARS AGO.
THE MEATMAN.
IT HADDA BEEN THE MEATMAN.
THE MEATMAN WHACKED TOMMY THE GREEK.
OH! DON'T LOOK, MARI.
FOR GOD'S SAKE...
BUTCHERED HIM, JUST LIKE THEY SAY.
...LOOK AWAY.

CHICAGO.
TWENTY-SIX YEARS AGO.
SCREETCHHHHH
TAGO TIMES
MAYBE WE LOST THEM.
YEAH, BABE.
MAYBE.
HE'S SO QUIET. HE NEVER CRIES.
HE'S SUCH A GOOD BABY.
MY SWEET, GOOD BABY.
SHUNK

SHHH. THEY CAN'T DO NOTHIN' NOW.
OH NO NO.
NEXT STOP, I WANT YOU TO RUN.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
THEY AIN'T GONNA CATCH ME.
SCREEETCHTCH
GIVE IT TO US.
Y'ALL CAN GO FUCK YOURSELVES, YOU BLOOD JUNKIES.
AND TELL BEANE SENIOR HE CAN FUCK HIMSELF, TOO.
WE'LL RELAY THE MESSAGE.

PLEASE, CAN'T YOU LET ME IN?!
PLEASE!
WE'RE CLOSED, SWEETHEART.
BUT IT'S IMPORTANT...
JEEZUS!
OH NO.
WAKE UP, BUDDY.
LAST STOP FOR THE NIGHT.
C'MON, THIS AIN'T NO--
OH GOD.

GOD. THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL HER.
SHE WAS JUST AN OLD WOMAN.
UNNECESSARY, YES. BUT BLYTHE GOT A KILL TONIGHT.
I WAS FEELING A BIT JEALOUS.
NO!!
YES. YOUR DARKIE IS DEAD, DEAR KAELYN.
NOW, GIVE ME THE BABY.
I HATE YOU, SHANDY. I HATE YOU.
I HATE BLYTHE.
I HATE FATHER.
AND YOU'LL NEVER HAVE THE ONLY THING I'VE EVER LOVED.
NO!
BLAM

OH, KAELYN. MY BIG SISTER.
DAYBREAK.
EHN. FUCK YOU, MORNING, YES?
SKOFFS
SKOFFS
MWAAH!
EHN? I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU...
NO SCRAPS FOR YOU, SMELLY BUM!
MUH MUH?
KURVA DRÁT!

TWO YEARS AGO.
I WAS LITTLE BLOOD-COVERED MONSTER.
SO YOU NAME ME VLAD, LIKE VLAD DRAGUL, YES? DRACULA!
THAT IS THE STORY YOU TELL ME, YES, BUTCHER?
IT IS MY FAVORITE ONE, BESIDES CHIPPY THE CHIPMUNK ISSUE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY.
GRRRGGGLL...
A Book About Books!
NO. YOU CANNOT.
PLEASE...
HCCCHNNNN--RE
FOR MY WHOLE LIFE I HAVE LIVED IN THIS PLACE. FOR MY WHOLE LIFE THIS MAN HAS CARED FOR ME.
WHEN MY MOTHER THREW ME AWAY, HE TOOK ME UP WHEN MY BODY DID NOT WORK, HE HELPED ME FIX IT AND GROW STRONG.
THE BUTCHER SHOWED ME TO USE THE BLADES. HE SHOWED ME TO USE THEM TO MOVE MY BODY. TO CUT THE MEAT. TO EASE MY PAIN.

THE BUTCHER. THIS MAN WHO CARED FOR ME MY WHOLE LIFE...HE IS DEAD.
MORE MEAT
AND NOW I, WHO HAVE NEVER LEFT THIS PLACE, AM ALONE.
WHAT I FEEL IS NOT THE TIGHTENING OF JOINTS. THE PULL OF MUSCLES ACROSS BONE. THIS IS A NEW PAIN.
BUT IT IS PAIN...
...SO I WILL CUT.
RRRAANGH!!
AAANNNNGGGHH!!!

I HAVE READ. I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO.
THERE IS NO CEILING.
THE AIR WILL BE BAD AND MY LUNGS ARE WEAK.
THERE WILL BE... OTHERS.
YOU TOLD ME OF THE OTHERS--HOW THEY FEAR ME, WHISPER ABOUT ME. WHEN SOMEONE DIES OR DISAPPEARS, THEY WHISPER. THEY SAY, "IT'S THE MEATMAN."
I AM A MONSTER.
HRRMM.
BUT YOU MUST BE BURIED LIKE GOOD DEAD MEN SHOULD BE, SO...
...I MUST GO OUT.

GRACELAND CEMETERY.
GRACELAND CEMETARY CREMATORIUM
HURR.
HURR
HURRRK!!
WATER. DIRT. MASK IS FULL. CANNOT BREATHE
HURRR HURR.
HURR.
HURRR.
HUUURRRUCK!
THE AIR--IMPURE. THE SAME AIR THAT TOUCHES THE OTHERS. TOUCHES THE GROUND AND DIRT AND PLANTS AND...
IT SMELLS SO BAD. LIKE WET, DIRTY THINGS. LIKE MACHINES AND CARS AND PIPES AND SMOKE. DIRTY DIRTY DIRTY.

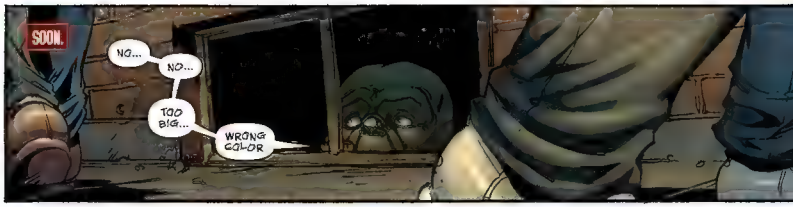
IN A COOL, DRY BASEMENT I HAVE LIVED, NEVER LEAVING. AFTER YOUR BURIAL, BUTCHER, IT IS IN A BASEMENT I SHALL STAY.
THERE WILL BE NO BAD AIR, NO WET, WORM-FILLED DIRT. THERE WILL BE NO WATER THAT FALLS FROM THE SKY.
AND THERE WILL BE NO...
...OTHERS.
I HAVE SEEN GIRLS BEFORE.
Here Lies

I HAVE SEEN THEIR STRANGE SHOES AS THEY WALK BY MY WINDOW.
I HAVE SEEN THEM IN THE MAGAZINES THE BUTCHER KEPT IN THE CHEST NEAR THE BATHROOM.
BUT NEVER. EVER. HAVE I SEEN ONE...
..AS BEAUTIFUL AS THIS
OH, GOD. THE MEATMAN.
NO!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
ANNNGH!

SHIT.
SHIIIT!!
DON'T COME NEAR ME.
I'LL CLAW YOUR FUCKING EYES OUT!
YOU MONSTER!
I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY FATHER!
FUCK YOU, MEATMAN!
PLEASE. DO NOT CALL ME "MEATMAN."
MY NAME IS VLAD, YES?
I CAN HELP YOU.
I'M PART OF THE FUCKING AGYROS FAMILY, YOU HEAR ME?
IF YOU TOUCH ME--
SHH.
WE ARE WATCHED.

THERE WAS SOMEONE.
ALL WHITE.
VERY FAST.
ALL WHITE?
SHIT...
UHH, LOOK-- V_AD, IS IT?
IF YOU WANTED ME DEAD, YOU'D HAVE DONE IT ALREADY.
AND, FRANKLY, YOU DON'T SEEM SMART ENOUGH TO BE A PSYCHO.
SO HOW ABOUT YOU GET ME OUT OF HERE RIGHT NOW?
I AM V_AD, YES?
I KNOW. WALK WITH ME, V_AD.

YE FOLLOWED THE ASYKOS GIRL FER A FEW DAYS.
AN' YE STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHO KILLED OL' TOMMY?
NO, FATHER. BUT I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND SOMETHING EVEN MORE INTERESTING.
MORE INTERESTING?
GIRL-HEADS OF THE OUTFIT ARE DROPPING LIKE TURDS, AN' THEY'RE ALL UNSANCTIONED KILLS.
YE KEN HOW MUCH I DINNAE LIKE NOT KNOWING THINGS.
I DO. THAT'S WHY I THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THIS...
YOUR LONG-LOST GRAND-SON?


SOON.
NO...
NO...
TOO BIG...
WRONG COLOR

CLOP CLOP CLOP
YES!

HELLO, MS. MARI!
I AM VERY GLAD YOU ARE TO BE BEING HERE.
BACK IN MIN.
HEY, V_AD.
UH, WE SHOULD GET SOMETHING OUT OF THE WAY RIGHT OFF...

THIS ISN'T A "THING," OKAY?
EVER SINCE MY DAD GOT KILLED, MY MOM HASN'T LET ME GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT A BODYGUARD.
SO, WHEN I WANT TO DO THINGS I DON'T WANT MY MOM TO KNOW ABOUT, I SNEAK AWAY.
BUT, Y'KNOW, AFTER THE OTHER NIGHT, I *WOULD* LIKE SOME PROTECTION.
YOU KEEP AN EYE OUT, FOLLOW A FEW STEPS BEHIND, AND DON'T BOTHER ME.
I'LL PAY YOU BACK BY BEING YOUR FRIEND AND SHOWING YOU AROUND THE CITY.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE TOO SHITTY A DEAL. DOES IT?
NO! IT SOUNDS LIKE A FAIR AMOUNT OF SHIT. YES?
CLOSED

AND SO I FOLLOW MARI.
I WATCH HER DO THE THINGS SHE DOES NOT WISH HER MOTHER TO KNOW ABOUT.
I SEE WHAT IT IS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE DO--PEOPLE MY AGE WHO DID NOT GROW UP IN A BASEMENT, WITH AN UGLY FACE.
ALL THE WHILE, I ALSO WATCH FOR THE WOMAN IN THE WHITE JACKET, THE ONE WHO SCARED MARI. I MAKE SURE ALWAYS THAT MARI IS SAFE
THOUGH I LURK AND HIDE, AND MOVE LIKE A GHOST, I AM NOT A GHOST OR A MONSTER. NOT "THE MEATMAN." I AM A PROTECTOR. A HERO.
A FRIEND.

SOMETIMES, IT IS ONLY THE TWO OF US. SHE TELLS ME ABOUT HER LIFE.
ABOUT HER MOTHER, AND ABOUT HER FATHER'S JOB, WHICH GOT HIM INTO TROUBLE WITH BAD PEOPLE.
SHE TELLS ME HOW SHE FELT WHEN HER FATHER DIED. I TELL HER ABOUT LOSING THE BUTCHER.
SOMETIMES, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE DEATHS, WE STOP. THEN WE ARE BOTH QUIET. WE DON'T NEED TO TALK.
WE BOTH KNOW.
IN A COOL, DRY BASEMENT I HAVE LIVED, NEVER LEAVING...
BUT NOW, HERE I AM. AMONG THE BAD AIR AND THE WET, WORM-FILLED DIRT.
OUTSIDE, WHERE THE WATER FALLS FROM THE SKY.
I AM HOME

HRRM. I DO NOT KNOW IF IT IS A GOOD IDEA.
AW, C'MON.
LET ME BUY YOU SOME STUFF. SOME NEW PANTS OR SOMETHING.
WE CAN GO TO THE BIG 'N' TALL STORE.
I TOTALLY OWE YOU.
I HAVE MY PAY. I HAVE YOU AS MY FRIEND, YES?
THAT IS BETTER THAN MANY, MANY PANTS.
HA HA. OH, VLAD...
...YOU SAY THE SWEETEST THINGS.

HRM.
WHAT?
SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING US. COME.
OH SHIT!
ARE YOU SURE?
YES.
TWO OF THEM. I SAW A FLASH OF WHITE.
OH, GOD. THE BEANE SISTERS.
I KNEW IT.
HRMM. THEY MOVE FAST.
VERY FAST...
HELLO, MARIANTHI.
BEEN A WHILE. HOW'S YOUR DAD?
IN CHUNKS?
SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
B..YTHE!

GLAD YOU REMEMBER US.
IT'S BEEN QUITE A FEW YEARS SINCE OUR DADS WENT TO WAR OVER THAT LITTLE BLOCK OF TURF IN GREEKTOWN.
HURT MARI, I KILL YOU.
WE AREN'T HERE FOR THE AGYROS GIRL.
WE'RE ACTUALLY LOOKING FOR WHOEVER'S BEEN MAKING PUZZLES OUT OF THE OUTFIT'S BOSSES.
NO, WE'RE MORE INTERESTED IN YOU.
VLAD, RIGHT?
I'M SURE YOU'VE WONDERED OVER THE YEARS WHY YOU LOOK LIKE YOU DO.
MAYBE WHO YOUR REAL PARENTS ARE AND WHY THEY ABANDONED YOU.
COME WITH US AND YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWERS TO ALL THOSE QUESTIONS.

THEY'LL DRINK MY BLOOD!
THE BEANES ARE FUCKING MONSTERS!
HMM. I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO BE ALL CHIVALROUS, VLAD.
BUT IF WE KILL MARI AND DRINK HER LITTLE BODY DRY, YOU SHOULDN'T BE UPSET.
THIS PERFECT, BEAUTIFUL GIRL NEVER CARED ABOUT YOU...
ALL YOU ARE TO HER IS A BIG, MISSHAPEN SHIELD.
HRMMM...
RRRRAAAGH!!!
HUK.
SHUNK
EEEIIIGH!!

STUBBORN AND BLIND, JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER.
YOU'RE PROTECTING SOMEONE WHO SECRETLY HATES YOU, WHO DOESN'T REALIZE THAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY TOO GOOD FOR HER.
YOU'RE BETTER THAN ALL OF THEM. YOU COULD EVEN BE ONE OF US!
I DO NOT WANT TO BE ONE OF YOU!
AGHK!
CHOK
ONE OF YOU?
YOU, WHO TORMENT THIS GIRL?
WHO THREATEN TO DRINK HER BLOOD?!
UGHK. BUT, VLAD, YOU ALREADY ARE.
YOU JUST KILLED HALF YOUR...HUNH... FAMILY.
THE BUTCHER SHOWED ME TO USE THE BLADES. HE TAUGHT ME TO USE THEM TO MOVE MY BODY. TO CUT THE MEAT.
TO EASE MY PAIN.
SHUNK

OH...
NO...
NO.
SLCH
SLSH
SHLICK
SPLUTCH
SPLUCK
THWUK
SHHH.
THIS SIGHT IS NOT FOR YOU...
...LOOK AWAY.
LET ME GO, YOU--YOU FUCKING MONSTER!!
NO, MARI! I PROTECTED YOU! I AM--
I AM YOUR FRIEND.

LATER.
I HAVE RETURNED TO MY BASEMENT. THE COOL, DRY BASEMENT, WHERE I HAVE SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE.
I MUST SOMETIMES GO OUT. STEP UPON THE WET GROUND. BREATHE THE BAD AIR. IMPURE. THE SAME AIR THAT TOUCHES THE OTHERS.
BECAUSE I MUST STILL FIND FOOD TO EAT.
TWO NEW MOBLAND MURDERS!
I HAVE NO ONE TO CARE FOR. NO ONE TO PROTECT. I AM NO LONGER AT HOME OUT HERE.

I AM VLAD, THE BLOOD-COVERED MONSTER.
I AM "THE MEATMAN."
AND I WILL ALWAYS BE ALONE.
THE BEGINNING.